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THE ORIENTAL ARMOR GALLERY

THE armor development of the Orient has gone no further in fundamental changes than the stage developed in Europe about 1400 (Transitional Period) when chain mail was reinforced with plates of metal. The parts which make up a typical suit of Oriental armor are the cuirass in four pieces (armor of four mirrors)—breast-, back-, and side-plates—which was buckled over a shirt of chain mail. On each forearm was an arm-guard, the left guard usually being smaller, as it was protected by the circular shield (sometimes but one arm-guard was used, either the right or the left, as when the left arm was protected with the shield and the right arm with the sword). The helmet with nasal piece and curtain of chain mail hanging from the sides and back completed the equipment.

In the East there has ever been a demand for enriched arms, and the custom of giving arms to distinguished visitors by the native princes has had a material effect in fostering this art. The installation of new cases and the rearrangement of the Oriental Armor Gallery have made it possible to exhibit adequately such highly decorated arms.

Although many of the important objects have already been described,¹ a review of the present exhibition may not be out of place. Let us mention briefly the Assyrian sword² which dates from the fourteenth century B. C. and bears a cuneiform inscription stating that it belonged to the "Son of Bêl-Nirâri, King of Assyria," and the Hispano-Arab sword³ of the fourteenth century, said to have belonged to Aben-Achmet, the last of the Abencerages, a Moorish family in Granada, famous in Spanish romance. The mount-

ings of the sword and scabbard are of copper, carved and gilded, enriched with polychrome enamels. There are but nine swords of this type known. The most celebrated was taken in 1483 from Boabdil el Chico, last Moorish king of Granada, following his defeat and capture at the Battle of Lucena.

On the east side of the gallery are exhibited the arms of Persia and India, many types being common to both countries. Miscellaneous arms and shields may be seen in cases 0.48 and 0.49. Of particular interest is the shield of rhinoceros hide which is proof to the best tempered blade. The reader may recall the scene in Scott's *Talisman* when such a shield was put to timely use by the Eastern warrior, and in George C. Stone's collection there is a similar shield covered with sword dents. The fine varieties of watering in Damascus blades may now be examined at close range. South Indian art is represented by a series of seventeenth-century fist-daggers and a gauntlet sword, these from the Armory of Maharaja Sivaji, last king of Tanjore (died 1855).¹ Serpents, dragons, and peacocks, the worship of which still prevails in India, ornament the hilts of these daggers, the workmanship of which may profitably be compared with the perforated hilts of seventeenth-century rapiers in case 82, Gallery H 8. The blades are those of rapiers which were broken up. Many swords of the East have European blades, as Oriental blades, which were well tempered and therefore brittle, or soft and easily bent, have never equaled the European blades in combined toughness and flexibility.

Chinese and Tibetan helmets², swords, and a cuirass may be seen in cases 0.47 and 0.50. Arms and armor of India, Persia, and Ceylon, among which are jade dagger handles, two Cingalese swords, and a blade half of yellow and half of black Damascus steel, may be seen in the center case.

¹ See *The Old Tanjore Armoury*, by M. J. Walhouse and *The Indian Antiquary*, August, 1878, pp. 192-196.

² *Bull. Met. Mus.*, November, 1905.

¹ *Handbook of Arms and Armor*, by Bashford Dean, pp. 138-146.

² See Burton's *Book of the Sword*, p. 207; *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, vol. iv, p. 347; *Bull. Met. Mus.*, Jan., March, and August, 1912.

³ Described in *Le Cabinet d'armes de Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord, Duc de Dino*, by the Baron de Cosson, Paris, 1901.

The Turkish arms and armor¹ are arranged in the cases on the west side of the gallery, excepting the Turkish swords shown in case 0.50. Two suits of fifteenth-century chain mail are represented. Specially worthy of note is a series of fifteenth-century helmets, the shape and size of which are convincing proof that they were worn over turbans. They appear to have come from the Arsenal at Constantinople of which they bear the mark, and date of the period of the taking of Constantinople by the Turks. In the Musée d'Artillerie² there is a helmet of this type which bears an inscription on which the date of these helmets is based. This helmet belonged to Bejazet II (Sultan 1481-1512), son of Mohammed II, the conqueror of Constantinople (1453). Although these helmets have an historical background, it is their artistic merit which predominates. The helmets, with conical bowl terminating in a button, were forged from single pieces of steel. They are divided into three horizontal areas, upper and lower with inscriptions from the Koran encrusted in silver.

Cases 0.58 and 0.59 contain a series of enriched firearms³ with silver mountings, three Berber guns, ten Turkish-Balkan guns of Ali Pasha, and five Turkish-Balkan pistols. A series of seventeenth-century bronze cast cannon from the Philippines, richly ornamented with foliation and torsade ridges are also shown.

Opposite the firearms is shown a series of Caucasian swords and daggers, and a gun. In the adjacent case is a collection of Philippine and Malayan krisses which merit a detailed description.

George C. Stone, from whose collection many of our most important specimens have been borrowed, generously aided in the arrangement of the present exhibition.

S. V. G.

¹ See the Baron de Cosson, *op. cit.*

² Le Musée de l'Armée. Armes et armures anciennes et souvenirs historiques les plus précieux. Publié sous la direction du Général Niox. Paris, Hôtel des Invalides, 1917. Pl. XXXI.

³ Note also the rare Cingalese gun which is shown in the Moore Collection (Gallery H 21) along with other Oriental arms and armor.

A SURPRISING SALES' RECORD

A DESULTORY interest in Egyptian subjects may be traced in this country from the early part of the nineteenth century. At no time did it flourish more than in the decade of the forties, during the remarkable career of George Gliddon as lecturer and writer on ancient Egypt. Gliddon was the son of the first United States Consular Agent and Consul in Egypt and himself, also, for a time, our Consul in Cairo; he came to this country with the prestige of twenty years' residence in Egypt.

Among his books was one called: Ancient Egypt. A Series of Chapters on Early Egyptian History, Archaeology, and Other Subjects Connected with Hieroglyphical Literature, which was brought out in a stereotype edition by the New World Press of New York in April, 1843. The date is engagingly rendered on the title-page, also in hieroglyphs, reading: "Year one thousand eight hundred and forty-three, third month, fifteenth day." The little book is dedicated to Richard K. Haight, a New Yorker, who seems to have been the first American to buy extensively the works of the "Champollionists,"¹ and who was known in his day at home and abroad² as a liberal supporter of those who were trying to further the study of ancient civilizations.

The book passed through twelve editions. Gliddon, in a prospectus of lectures for the winter season of 1846-47, said that in less than three years eighteen thousand copies of the "Chapters," as he called the book, had been sold. When

¹ Gliddon, at least, claimed that when he came to this country in 1842, he found no books suitable to his needs in Boston or New York, that Mr. Haight, whom he knew first in Egypt in 1836, came to his rescue and bought what he needed, including the first copy of Rosellini's Monumenti to be seen in the United States. Richard K. Haight's library of books on Egypt was bequeathed to the New York Historical Society, of which he was a member, and there is record in the Society's files that he believed his copy of Lepsius' Denkmäler to be the first brought to this country.

² Revue des deux mondes, vol. 40 (1846), p. 989.